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# Barriers to Latina Access of Higher Education

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UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND - HONORS PROGRAM

# BARRIERS

To Latina Patterns of Higher Education

Marissa Montalban

2012

HONORS PROJECT

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### What, Why, and Why Now?

In the past few decades, attendance patterns of higher education institutions have achieved a positive trend in America. More and more people are choosing to continue their education after high school to further their career options. It is commonly known that there is typically a large difference in the income that those with college educations achieve versus those who did not receive a college degree. This trend affects all subsets of the population, except for one notable portion: the American Latina population.

Hispanics are the largest minority group in the United States, yet they also have achieved the lowest rates of college attainment. Over the past decade, a substantial amount of research on these patterns has emerged, but more still needs to be done. For example, recent research has shown that Latinas who are in college suffer higher rates of abuse as children than Caucasians who are in college. This new way of research can influence innovative ways of thinking about Latinas in college. However, there is still much more research that needs to be done. There may be sufficient research on Hispanic college students, as well as female college students, but there is not sufficient research regarding female Hispanic college students.

The rest of the population in America – including the other minority groups, such as African Americans – has increased their levels of college attainment over the past few decades to be closer comparatively to the Caucasian population. Even the gender gap that was once present in American colleges and universities has closed. Still, Hispanics lag behind with their education patterns.

According to Patricia Gandara and Frances Contreras, “While all other ethnic groups – including African Americans- have gradually increased their college graduation rates, Latinos have seen almost no such progress in three decades.”<sup>1</sup> This is a problem because college has

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<sup>1</sup>Gandara, Patricia C., and Frances Contreras. 2.

become very important in America's working culture, and in many instances, it is essential for one to be able to better their financial situation. "At a time when college has become the new critical threshold for entry into the middle class, overwhelming majority of Latinos do not attend degree-granting colleges – and those who do attend, often don't graduate. Thus Latinos remain the most undereducated major population group in the country."<sup>2</sup>

Not only are they missing out on opportunities to grow and learn academically, their lack of a degree makes them less competitive in the job market. "Census statistics in 1987 showed that 8.5% of all Hispanics over the age of twenty-five were college graduates, as opposed to 20.6% of the same age cohort among the non-Hispanic population in the United States."<sup>3</sup> Although the statistics are slightly outdated, they show the general rule – Hispanics are much less likely to attend and graduate from a degree-granting institution.

Female Hispanics, or Latinas, have often been described as having two strikes against them. Females have typically been underrepresented in higher education settings, and it is only recently that they have been welcomed into the collegial atmosphere. In some instances, there are still different opportunities available to females than males. Scott Davies and Neil Guppy state that "males are more likely than females to enter high-payoff fields and selective schools."<sup>4</sup> Although all schools will offer generally the same education, the more selective schools are considered more prestigious, and may create more opportunities for those who attend them. Also, these schools typically enroll students who are part of the more affluent portion of the population, and many times, this means that Hispanics are not let in. "Women, especially minority women, face a more hostile atmosphere and double discrimination."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Gandara, Patricia C., and Frances Contreras. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Brodie Welch, Lynne. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Davies, Scott, and Guppy, Neil. 1433.

<sup>5</sup> Brodie Welch, Lynne. 14.

### Differences among the Group

Within this broadly labeled group, it is important to note what the term “Latina” or “Hispanic” encompasses. It is used in reference to an extremely diverse people, coming from many different places in the world, including Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and South America.<sup>6</sup> Although they all speak Spanish natively, there are many different dialects and accents. They have also settled in different places around America, and different locations have a higher percentage of a certain group. For example, in the Mid- and Southwest, the majority of Hispanics are Mexican, and in the Northeast, most are Puerto Rican.

Education rates in the group tend to vary slightly. Mexican Americans represent 58% of the Hispanic population, but only make up 7% of college enrollment. Similarly, Puerto Ricans comprise 7.8%, and Central and South Americans make up 11.8%.<sup>7</sup> However, there is one exception, as those of Cuban descent tend to have higher patterns of achievement. “Cuban Americans actually outperform white students in college attainment.”<sup>8</sup> This is most likely due to the fact that many people who emigrated from Cuba in the past decades did so because of political reasons and not economic ones. In 1987, 17.1% of Cubans held a bachelor’s degree or higher. However, Cubans only make up 5% of the Hispanic population in America.<sup>9</sup>

### Current Factual Information

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<sup>6</sup> Gandara, Patricia C., and Frances Contreras. 18.

<sup>7</sup> Castillo, Linda G., Collie W. Conoley, and Daniel F. Brossart. 151.

<sup>8</sup> Gandara, Patricia C., and Frances Contreras. 18.

<sup>9</sup> Brodie Welch, Lynne. 74.

Progress has seemed to slow down or stall completely in regards to Latina's levels of attainment. In the past two decades, other minority groups have improved their rates of attendance, but this is unfortunately not true for Hispanics.<sup>10</sup> According to Gandara and Contreras, "Latino degree completion has been stagnant."<sup>11</sup> Most Hispanics do graduate from high school, which is a prerequisite for college, but there are still many that drop out before they graduate.

Even if the students are able to graduate high school and attend college, they are not likely to graduate with a degree. "Latinos complete their bachelor's degrees at less than a third the rate of white students."<sup>12</sup> Currently, only one in ten Latinos have a college degree, compared to one in four for Caucasians and one in three for Asian Americans.<sup>13</sup>

### Primary and Secondary Education

In order to attend a degree-granting institution, one must first go through elementary and high school education. For many Latinas, this is a crucial time of development and growth. Sadly, the educational system fails to cater to the needs of Hispanic students adequately. The teachers of schools that are heavily populated with Hispanic students tend to have teachers who are not capable of providing the best education possible.

Gandara and Contreras note that "In the highest minority schools (those with 99% or more minority students in their populations), 88% of the teachers scored in the bottom quartile for quality. By contrast, the schools with the lowest percentage (less than half) of minority students only had 11% of teachers who scored in the bottom quartile of the teacher-quality

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<sup>10</sup> Gandara, Patricia C., and Frances Contreras. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Gandara, Patricia C., and Frances Contreras. 24.

<sup>12</sup> Gandara, Patricia C., and Frances Contreras. 24.

<sup>13</sup> Gandara, Patricia C., and Frances Contreras. 5.

index.”<sup>14</sup> This simply means that minority students are not learning from high quality teachers as often as non-minority students are.

There are a few reasons for this. Most teachers would prefer to work in the schools with less minority students because they tend to be in better areas. Also, non-minority schools tend to receive more funding, so that their teachers can be paid better. This also perpetuates the fact that many minority and elementary high school kids are disadvantaged before they even step inside an educational institution. They tend to come from less affluent families, where the parents may not have the resources or the time to teach their children the alphabet and counting before they enter the school system. At home, the primary language spoken could be Spanish. In fact, some Hispanic students may not even encounter English before they enter school.

According to a study mentioned in Gandara and Contreras’s book, one can predict which student will go to college and which student will not, based on their reading scores in the third grade.<sup>15</sup> If a student does not even begin to learn English until they are five years old, that means that they have only experienced approximately three years of the language by the third grades, as opposed to eight years of English speaking and reading by their non-Hispanic peers. Even if they did know English before they entered the school system, they may not be fully fluent or have as strong of a grasp on the language.

Although dropout rates are typically associated with high school, the fact is that many Hispanic students drop out before they even enter high school. For example, in Boston from the years 2003 to 2006, 14.4% of Latino students dropped out of middle school.<sup>16</sup> This dramatically reduces their chances of choosing to return to school to graduate high school, and makes it virtually inconceivable that they would attend college and graduate.

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<sup>14</sup> Gandara, Patricia C., and Frances Contreras. 103.

<sup>15</sup> Gandara, Patricia C., and Frances Contreras. 253.

<sup>16</sup> Gandara, Patricia C., and Frances Contreras. 23.



## Perceptions

Another barrier to Hispanic female achievement is the lack of perceived and actual opportunities available. “Growing up Latino and working-class or poor in the United States means that opportunity can be more apparent than real and that opportunities offered to almost every middle-class kid from the suburbs could be out of reach for a [Hispanic Child] from the Bario.”<sup>17</sup> The truth is that many Hispanic children may not know about their opportunities, if there even are any available to them.

Perceptions of others are also important to Hispanic students. In a recent study, Latinas reported more often than Latinos that they would like to be perceived as good students. This also points to the factual statistic that Hispanic women do actually graduate from college more often than Hispanic men. However, since Hispanic female rates of attainment are so low, this does not point to a large gender gap.<sup>18</sup>

## College Environment

The success of a student in college depends on many factors, but sometimes, crucial factors are overlooked. There is a positive relationship between how involved one is at their school, and how successful they are there.<sup>19</sup> This means that the more a Latina student is involved in her school, the more likely she will be to not drop out and attain a college degree. Adequate schools groups must be not only available to Latina students, but be welcoming and open as well so that Latinas won't feel too intimidated to become involved.

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<sup>17</sup> Gandara, Patricia C., and Frances Contreras. 16.

<sup>18</sup> Brodie Welch, Lynne. 76.

<sup>19</sup> Cole, Darnell and Anaya, Guadalupe.11.

Campuses should be open and perceptive to the needs of Latina students. One method of doing this could be through a survey distributed to the present Latina students. Topics covered could include items such as whether or not the campus is welcoming, and what can be done to make it more welcoming. In the survey, it is important to ask questions in a way that cannot be construed as insulting or intimidating.<sup>20</sup> If the survey is successful, it can be very insightful on how to make the campus more appealing to Latina students.

Potentially the most important factor at college campuses is the relationship between faculty and students. A web of support to include various members of the campus such as faculty, students, alumni, and student life officers can positively influence a Latina's experience, which in turn will make them more likely to graduate.

Although some institutions may believe that this is difficult to achieve, it really is not. Many institutions already have offices of Student Affairs or Student Life which could be used to facilitate relationships amongst campuses. They can have officers, advisors, or counselors who are familiar with the various cultures that are present, so they can communicate with and support the students more effectively.<sup>21</sup>

Current students can be placed in a mentorship with previous, successful students.<sup>22</sup>“Establishment of adequate support networks is one way in which to develop a campus that is friendly toward minority women. College campuses can be confusing and overwhelming to individuals who are new to the system.”<sup>23</sup> One study was conducted in particular to see Hispanic students' perceptions of faculty support in higher education. In this study, 98% of the Latino

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<sup>20</sup> Brodie Welch, Lynne. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Cole, Darnell G and Anaya, Guadalupe.11.

<sup>22</sup> Castillo, Linda G., Collie W. Conoley, and Daniel F. Brossart. 155.

<sup>23</sup> Brodie Welch, Lynne. 1.

students who reported that they were doing well in school stated that they had interacted with a faculty member outside of class in some way, either academically or socially.<sup>24</sup>

The study also found that one in six Latinas who were considered “high achieving” felt that Caucasian students had better access to faculty relationships outside of the classroom.<sup>25</sup> One of the reasons for this could be that more teachers are Caucasian than Hispanic, so when they do interact with their teachers, they have to talk to someone who is a different ethnicity. This may not seem like a large issue, but it is unfair considering that Caucasian students may be able to relate better to Caucasian teachers because of a shared culture.<sup>26</sup> The bottom line is that when students felt that they were able to seek support from teachers outside of classrooms, they generally fared better.<sup>27</sup>

As mentioned previously, there are many other factors that determine a particular student’s success, but in the case of Latina college students, there are many that just have not been researched. For example, generally students who live on campus as opposed to off campus do better in school. However, there is no data that has been collected on whether or not this is true for Hispanic students, who potentially come from a different home environment than other students.<sup>28</sup>

### Socio-Economic Factors

There are various social and economic factors that can contribute to the success rate of Latinas in college. Hispanic families tend to earn less income than Caucasian families. Besides financial implications, income can be an indicator of success in college. Students who receive

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<sup>24</sup> Cole, Darnell G and Anaya, Guadalupe.5.

<sup>25</sup> Cole, Darnell G and Anaya, Guadalupe.5.

<sup>26</sup> Cole, Darnell G and Anaya, Guadalupe.5.

<sup>27</sup> Cole, Darnell G and Anaya, Guadalupe.11.

<sup>28</sup> Cole, Darnell G and Anaya, Guadalupe.11.

financial aid from their parents may be able to work less or not work at all concurrent to studying for their degree. This means that the student will have more time to study, and will be less stressed about finances. However, most Hispanic families cannot afford to help their child financially.<sup>29</sup> This could also mean that a Latina is excluded completely from college. “Even in the most generous states, a four year college is now outside the reach of most low-income students.”<sup>30</sup> If they cannot rely on their parents for help, and cannot get scholarships or financial aid, it will not be possible for them to go, even if they had potential.

They tend to live in less favorable neighborhoods because they cannot afford a better one, but this too can impact academic success. Also, if Latinos are able to make it to college, they are usually the first in their families to do so. This means that their family may not fully understand what the student is going through, and how much work and effort truly goes in to earning a college degree. They ultimately may not be sure how to emotionally and mentally support their student.<sup>31</sup>

The role that socio-economic factors play can be seen most clearly when comparing Hispanic students that do succeed against Hispanic students that do not. The ones that do succeed tend to have high self-esteem, support from their parents or other family members, are involved in their schools, and have set goals and friends with similar goals.<sup>32</sup> Most notably, they tend to come from more affluent homes with more opportunities. “Latino student who defy expectations and make it to a four year college equipped to complete a degree differ in many ways from their Latino peers who are not as educationally successful. On average, they come from

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<sup>29</sup> Castillo, Linda G., Collie W. Conoley, and Daniel F. Brossart. 152.

<sup>30</sup> Gandara, Patricia C., and Frances Contreras. 72.

<sup>31</sup> Gandara, Patricia C., and Frances Contreras. 246.

<sup>32</sup> Gandara, Patricia C., and Frances Contreras. 197.

homes with more resources and their parents are better educated.”<sup>33</sup> The more successful Hispanic students are those whose parents can help them financially, but also know how to support them mentally and emotionally.

### Government and Policy

There are many programs in place to bring more Hispanic students into higher education. However, these programs are usually flawed, outdated, or unsupported. In the 1970s, programs were instated to recruit more Hispanics into colleges and universities. However, by the 1980’s, funding for the majority of these programs were cut, and some claim that the programs financed in the previous program’s place work to undermine Hispanic education.<sup>34</sup> Even where there are programs in place to help, students may be unaware of them or not sure how to access them. One estimation by Clifford Adelman of the U.S. Department of Education states that approximately 5% of all Latino students who qualify for these programs actually participate in them.<sup>35</sup> Ultimately, programs are going to be rendered ineffective if they are in place but no one is aware of them.

Some people who have actually experienced being a Hispanic college student believe that the government and intuitions talk about assisting students, but don’t intend on actually helping. One Hispanic student said, “Despite the lip service given to the integration of minorities into institutional life, what have frequently occurred instead are ghettotization, marginalization, and isolation.” It is clear that he believes that many people do not care about giving Hispanic students a fair chance.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Gandara, Patricia C., and Frances Contreras. 246.

<sup>34</sup> Gandara, Patricia C., and Frances Contreras. 26.

<sup>35</sup> Gandara, Patricia C., and Frances Contreras. 253.

<sup>36</sup> Gandara, Patricia C., and Frances Contreras. 64.

### Cultural Barriers

One of the barrier to success in college for Latinas could be the fact that their traditional culture and the American culture vary greatly, and can sometimes appear to be irreconcilable. For example, many Latinas are expected by their culture and family to be family oriented and a “traditional” wife. With the emphasis that American culture puts on education, they are also expected to study hard and do well. However, both are time consuming, and at certain points, one has to choose priorities. Unfortunately, when one has a husband and children to care for, education tends to be less of a priority. Also, being expected to be a good mother, good student, and good wife all at the same time can be stressful.<sup>37</sup>

In many Hispanic cultures, “...family unity and loyalty are highly valued.”<sup>38</sup> All of the members of the family rely on each other for support. However, it is possible that the experiences of a Latina student’s parents can differ drastically from her own, especially if her parents were immigrants and she was born in America. They may not understand the type of commitment that a college degree requires, though they may expect her to achieve one all the same.<sup>39</sup>

Language is a great barrier preventing proper education in America. It is true that students who have a good grasp on both English and Spanish - bilingual students – tend to perform better in school. However, not all immigrants or children of immigrants are bilingual. Some may only speak Spanish, or have a rudimentary understanding of English that is not adequate enough for them to understand everything that is going on in class. Basically, the

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<sup>37</sup> Castillo, Linda G., Collie W. Conoley, and Daniel F. Brossart. 151.

<sup>38</sup> Castillo, Linda G., Collie W. Conoley, and Daniel F. Brossart. 151.

<sup>39</sup> Castillo, Linda G., Collie W. Conoley, and Daniel F. Brossart. 151.

knowledge of English is vitally important to being successful in education, and whether or not English is spoken at home could be a factor in whether or not the student understands it.<sup>40</sup>

A large portion of the Hispanic immigrant population in America is undocumented or unauthorized. This means that they have less access to programs such as government support. It also means that the family may have to live in secrecy and not draw attention to them. They are constantly afraid of being caught, and that can put a lot of stress on the family as a whole. “Because unauthorized immigrants have less access to social services and postsecondary education, their job options are more limited and they may be less able to incorporate successfully into the broader community.”<sup>41</sup>

Claude Steele came up with the theory of “Stereotype Threat”, which states that “many minorities worry that if they engage in academic competition, they run the risk of confirming the stereotype that they are intellectually inferior if they do not perform at superior levels.”<sup>42</sup> Some Latinas may be so afraid of failing that they don’t bother, and fail automatically. If Latinas act like they don’t care and fail, that is one thing, but if they try their hardest and fail then they are showing the world that they are academically incompetent.

A recent study showed that Latina college students have dealt with more abuse and violence than their female Caucasian peers. Out of the Latinas studied, 38.4% had been sexually abused as a child, on an average for over three years. Latina students dealt with violence more often, the violence itself was considered more severe, and on average, it lasted longer. This is just one example of trauma that could surface later on in life.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Castillo, Linda G., Collie W. Conoley, and Daniel F. Brossart. 151.

<sup>41</sup> Gandara, Patricia C., and Frances Contreras. 3.

<sup>42</sup> Gandara, Patricia C., and Frances Contreras. 79.

<sup>43</sup> Clemons, John C. et al. 751.

However, Hispanic females do not operate solely in their Hispanic culture. As part of the immigrant tradition, their culture operates within the culture of America. In order for Latinas to navigate through their days successfully, they must be proficient in both cultures, which is not always easy. It can be a source of stress and confusion, as sometimes the two cultures do not agree with each other. “The conflict of differing cultural attitudes and behaviors may be a source of distress and a negative influence on college adjustment.”<sup>44</sup> When Latinas are in primary and secondary school, they could be surrounded by other students just like themselves, essentially in the same culture. However, when they get to college, they will most likely encounter different types of people, and be forced to go by different societal norms.

As those who exist in it are well aware, American culture values independence and individualism. Students are often encouraged to compete with each other in an academic setting, in order to be the best. However, this varies greatly from traditional Hispanic culture, where the family is valued highly, and collaboration is encouraged and praised. One student talked about how when she first began schooling here, she couldn’t understand why the teacher would single her out to ask her questions, instead of asking the group for a collaborative answer.<sup>45</sup>

One student talks about her experience where she felt that no matter how much she accomplished, she was still perceived as “other” to the non-minority students and teachers. “We would always have an accent, however perfect our pronunciation, however excellent our enunciation, however divine our diction. That accent would be heard in our pigmentation, our physiognomy, our names. We were in short, the other.”<sup>46</sup> This student also struggled with the fact that he was different enough so that he did not fit in, but not “exotic” which could be considered “cool.”

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<sup>44</sup> Castillo, Linda G., Collie W. Conoley, and Daniel F. Brossart. 151.

<sup>45</sup> Castillo, Linda G., Collie W. Conoley, and Daniel F. Brossart. 152.

<sup>46</sup> Gandara, Patricia C., and Frances Contreras. 62.



A major issue affecting Latina women in general, but especially as students, are the stereotypes that are perpetuated about them. The stereotypes, both negative and false, hinder their achievements and reduce them to unintelligent objects. The stereotype of the Latina was referred to as “The Spicy Stereotype”.<sup>47</sup> When people navigate through situations that are unfamiliar to them, they may not have anything to rely on other than their stereotypes. “Thus, a warm smile is mistaken for a flirtatious one; expansive gesticulation is interpreted as lack of verbal ability; closer personal space is perceived as a sign of inviting intimacy.”<sup>48</sup> People believe that looks are the only thing that is important to Latinas so that they can attract a husband, not achieve an education.<sup>49</sup> However, interpreting situations based on stereotypes are almost always incorrect.

Another barrier affecting Latinas is the barrier that teenage pregnancy presents in relation to attending college. In the 1990’s, the US teen pregnancy rate decreased for the entire population, by 28.5%.<sup>50</sup> However, Latinas as a specific minority were not able to decrease their rates as much as the rest of the population, decreasing their rate by only 15%.<sup>51</sup> In 2002, Latina’s had a teenage birth rate of 8.3%, compared to the Caucasian population, which was only 4.3%.<sup>52</sup> It is important to note that although African American teens are more likely to become pregnant than Latina teens, they are also more likely to abort the pregnancy. This may be because the Latin culture as a whole is more family oriented and tends to favor high rates of

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<sup>47</sup> Elkins, Sarah.

<sup>48</sup> Brodie Welch, Lynne. 71.

<sup>49</sup> Elkins, Sarah.

<sup>50</sup> Dickson, Mary C.

<sup>51</sup> Dickson, Mary C.

<sup>52</sup> Dickson, Mary C.

fertility, even if they are unintended.<sup>53</sup> The differing views of abortion amongst the ethnic minorities lead the statistics to be expressed in terms of live births rather than incidence rates.

Although having a child as a teen is undisputedly difficult, it also perpetuates a lack of future economic options for the young mother. In 2002, only 4% of Latina mothers in between the ages of 15 and 19 were able to graduate from high school and continue on to college.<sup>54</sup> Thus, as a significant portion of teenage Latinas experience pregnancy, it acts as a notable barrier to college attainment.

### Conclusion

This literature review finds that although there is some research on Hispanic education patterns as well as female education patterns, it is difficult to find relevant and recent information on a synthesis of the two. In the future, more research should be done to alleviate the problem of the lack of female Hispanics in higher education.

In the meantime, the research that has been completed suggests some things to ensure that Latina students who are attending colleges or universities continue to do so and graduate. Some recommendations are at the classroom level, and must be facilitated through the teacher; others must be addressed by the university; yet some should be addressed by the American culture as a whole. Ultimately, it is a large portion of the population that is not getting the education they so desperately need in order to be successful.

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<sup>53</sup> Dickson, Mary C.

<sup>54</sup> Dickson, Mary C.

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# Do you have 10 minutes?

## Please take this survey!

The survey is part of an Honors Project being completed by a University of Rhode Island student, and gauges some challenges to higher education.

It will be used to create a community resource to help combat some of these challenges.

This survey is voluntary and anonymous.

Thank you in advance!

**<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/9LHBJRW>**

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## **Marissa Montalban: Survey**

The University of Rhode Island  
Department of: Political Science  
Address: 80 Upper College Road, Kingston, RI 02881  
Title of Project: Barriers to Higher Education

Dear Participant

You have been invited to take part in the research project described below. If you have any questions, please feel free to call Marissa Montalban or Dr. Kristin Johnson, the people mainly responsible for this study.

The purpose of this study is to assess barriers to higher education in Rhode Island. Responses to these items will be safely contained through our online survey tool

**YOU MUST BE AT LEAST 18 YEARS OLD** to be in this research project.

If you decide to take part in this study, your participation will involve filling out a survey pertaining to levels of education, personal views, and social / economic characteristics.

The possible risks or discomforts of the study are minimal.

Although there are no direct benefits of the study, your answers will help increase the knowledge regarding access to higher education in Rhode Island.

Your part in this study is anonymous. That means that your answers to all questions are private. No one else can know if you participated in this study and no one else can find out what your answers were. Scientific reports will be based on group data and will not identify you or any individual as being in this project.

The decision to participate in this research project is up to you. You do not have to participate and you can refuse to answer any question.

Participation in this study is not expected to be harmful or injurious to you. However, if this study causes you any injury, you should write or call the Marissa Montalban and Dr. Kristin Johnson at the University of Rhode Island at (401) 874-5495

If you have other concerns about this study or if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Rhode Island's Vice President for Research, 70 Lower College Road, Suite 2, URI, Kingston, RI, (401) 874-4328.

You are at least 18 years old. You have read the consent form and your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. Your filling out the survey implies your consent to participate in this study.

If these questions are upsetting and you want to talk, please use the phone numbers below:  
Counseling Center, (401) 874-2288

Thank you, Marissa Montalban

By taking this survey, you give your assent to participate in this research project.

**Participation in the survey is voluntary and anonymous. You may skip any question or stop at any time. Completion of the survey should take about 10 minutes. Do you wish to complete the survey?**

**Yes**

**No**

**Participación en la encuesta es voluntaria y anónima. Usted puede saltarse cualquier pregunta o detener en cualquier momento. La finalización de la encuesta es de unos 10 minutos.  
¿Desea completar la encuesta?**

**Si**

**No**

1. Are you 18 years or older? *¿Usted tiene 18 años o más?*

1. Yes *Sí*

2. No *No*

Please select the age group that best describes you. *Por favor, escoja el grupo que mejor describe su edad.*

1. 18 – 30

2. 31-45

3. 45-60

4. 60 and above *y mayor*

2. Which ethnicity do you identify as? *¿Qual es su origin étnico?*

1. Caucasian *Caucasiano*

2. African American *Africano-estadounidense*

3. Hispanic/Latino *Hispánico/Latino*

4. Other *Otro*

5. Decline to state *Negarse a decir*

3. How would you rate your knowledge of English? *¿Cómo usted evalúa su conocimiento del idioma inglés?*

1. Don't speak English *No hablo inglés*

- |                           |                                     |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2. Speak some English     | <i>Hablo un poco inglés</i>         |
| 3. Speak English well     | <i>Hablo en inglés muy bien</i>     |
| 4. Speak English Fluently | <i>Hablo en inglés fluentemente</i> |

4. What language do you speak at home? *¿Qué idioma usted hable en su domicilio?*

- |             |                           |
|-------------|---------------------------|
| 1. English  | <i>Ingles</i>             |
| 2. Spanish  | <i>Español</i>            |
| 3. Mix/Both | <i>Una mescla/Los Dos</i> |
| 4. Other    | <i>Otra</i>               |

5. Where were you born? *¿A donde usted nació?*

- |                    |                  |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 1. America         |                  |
| 2. Another country | <i>Otro país</i> |

If another country, where? *¿Si otro país, a donde?*

6. Do you have children? *¿Usted tiene hijos?*

- |        |           |
|--------|-----------|
| 1. Yes | <i>Sí</i> |
| 2. No  | <i>No</i> |

If yes, how many? *¿Cuántos?*

- |                   |                         |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. One to two     | <i>De uno a dos</i>     |
| 2. Two to three   | <i>De dos a tres</i>    |
| 3. Three to four  | <i>De tres a cuatro</i> |
| 4. Five and above | <i>Cinco o mas</i>      |

7. What is the highest level you completed in school? *¿Cuál es el nivel de educación cumplido?*

- |                       |                                 |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Some middle school | <i>Escuela primaria</i>         |
| 2. Some high school   | <i>Algún escuela secundaria</i> |

- |                    |                                    |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| 3. Diploma         | <i>Escuela secundaria cumplido</i> |
| 4. Some college    | <i>Algún universidad</i>           |
| 5. Degree or above | <i>Titulo universitario</i>        |
8. Do you have access to a computer with internet? *¿Usted tiene acceso a internet?*
- |              |                      |
|--------------|----------------------|
| 1. Yes       | <i>Sí</i>            |
| 2. No        | <i>No</i>            |
| 3. Sometimes | <i>Algunas veces</i> |
9. Do you regularly use social networking sites like Facebook? *¿Usted usa sitio web de red social como o parecido a Facebook?*
- |              |                      |
|--------------|----------------------|
| 1. Yes       | <i>Sí</i>            |
| 2. No        | <i>No</i>            |
| 3. Sometimes | <i>Algunas veces</i> |
10. Have you ever been contacted by a college outreach group? *¿Alguna vez Usted ha sido contactado por un grupo de extensión universitaria?*
- |             |                          |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Yes      | <i>Sí</i>                |
| 2. No       | <i>No</i>                |
| 3. Not sure | <i>No estoy seguro/a</i> |
11. If all education was free, would you want to receive a degree/another degree? *¿Si todo tipo de educación fuera gratis, usted quisiera obtener un/otro título universitario?*
- |             |                          |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| 1. YES      | <i>Sí</i>                |
| 2. NO       | <i>No</i>                |
| 3. NOT SURE | <i>No estoy seguro/a</i> |

Please answer the following questions using the following scale. *Por favor de contestar las siguientes preguntas usando la siguiente escala.*

- |             |                            |
|-------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Disagree | <i>No estoy de acuerdo</i> |
| 2. Neutral  | <i>Neutral</i>             |



3. Agree *Estoy de acuerdo*

12. A college degree is necessary to make good money. *Un título universitario es necesario para conseguir un buen salario.*

1. Disagree *No estoy de acuerdo*

2. Neutral *Neutral*

3. Agree *Estoy de acuerdo*

13. I feel that others want me to succeed. *Yo me siento que otros tienen deseos que yo tenga éxito.*

1. Disagree *No estoy de acuerdo*

2. Neutral *Neutral*

3. Agree *Estoy de acuerdo*

14. My experience with school has been positive. *Mi experiencia con la escuela ha sido positiva.*

1. Disagree *No estoy de acuerdo*

2. Neutral *Neutral*

3. Agree *Estoy de acuerdo*

15. When I was in school, there was a faculty member/teacher that I could look up to and talk to. *Cuando yo estaba en la escuela, había miembros de la facultad/maestros que yo podía ver como personas ejemplares y podía hablar con ellos.*

1. Disagree *No estoy de acuerdo*

2. Neutral *Neutral*

3. Agree *Estoy de acuerdo*

16. Being traditional to my culture is important to me. *Ser tradicional a mi cultura es importante para mí.*

1. Disagree *No estoy de acuerdo*

2. Neutral *Neutral*

3. Agree                      *Estoy de acuerdo*

17. My culture and values are different from American culture and values. *Mi cultura y valores son diferentes de la cultura y los valores Americanos.*

1. Disagree                      *No estoy de acuerdo*

2. Neutral                      *Neutral*

3. Agree                      *Estoy de acuerdo*

18. If I was in school, it would help if I could talk to others with similar experiences. *Su yo estuviera en la escuela, me ayudaría si yo pudiera hablar con otros que han tenido experiencias similares.*

1. Disagree                      *No estoy de acuerdo*

2. Neutral                      *Neutral*

3. Agree                      *Estoy de acuerdo*

19. Getting married and starting a family is more important than education. *Casarme y empezar una familia, es más importante que mi educación.*

1. Disagree                      *No estoy de acuerdo*

2. Neutral                      *Neutral*

3. Agree                      *Estoy de acuerdo*

20. What socio-economic class do you consider yourself to be? *¿A qué grupo de clase socio-económico usted considera usted pertenece?*

1. Lower                      *Baja*

2. Middle/Working                      *Media/Trabajadora*

3. Upper                      *Alta*

21. How many people, including yourself, are in your household? *¿Cuántas personas, incluyéndose usted, hay en su familia?*

1. One to two                      *Uno a dos*

2. Three to four                      *Tres a cuatro*

3. Four to five                      *Cuatro a cinco*

4. Five or more                      *Cinco o mas*

22. What resources in your community do you currently use? Please list. *¿Cuales recursos en su comunidad usted usa en este momento?*

23. Do you think RI has more, less, or the same resources available as other places? *¿Usted piensa Rhode Island tiene más, o menos, recursos disponible comparado con otros lugares?*

- |         |              |
|---------|--------------|
| 1. More | <i>Mas</i>   |
| 2. Same | <i>Igual</i> |
| 3. Less | <i>Menos</i> |

24. Do you believe that the way other people see your culture affects your opportunities? *¿Usted piensa que la manera que otras personas ven su cultura afecta sus oportunidades?*

- |             |                          |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Yes      | <i>Si</i>                |
| 2. No       | <i>No</i>                |
| 3. Maybe    | <i>Quizás</i>            |
| 4. Not sure | <i>No estoy seguro/a</i> |

If so, do you believe they are positive or negative? *¿Si usted contesto que si, usted cree que son positivas o negativas?*

- |             |                          |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Positive | <i>Positive</i>          |
| 2. Negative | <i>Negativo</i>          |
| 3. Not sure | <i>No estoy seguro/a</i> |

25. Do one or both of your parents have a college degree or equivalent? *¿Uno o ambos de su padres tienen un nivel educativo de Universidad o el equivalente?*

- |        |            |
|--------|------------|
| 1. One | <i>Uno</i> |
|--------|------------|

- 2. Both                      *Ambos*
- 3. Neither                   *Ninguno*

Thank you very much for your time. *Muchas gracias por su tiempo.*

# BARRIERS

TO LATINA'S PATTERNS OF HIGHER  
EDUCATION

Marissa Montalban  
Dr. Kristin Johnson, Advisor  
URI Honors Program 2012

# Fall 2011

Research  
(September-  
November)

Literature  
Review  
(November-  
December)

Research  
Grant  
Proposal  
(December-  
January)

# Spring 2012

Survey  
Design

(February)

IRB  
Training  
&  
Approval

(March)

Survey  
Recruit-  
ment &  
Distribut  
-ion

(April)

Results  
&  
Analysis

(April-May)

Resource  
Creation

(April –May)

# LITERATURE REVIEW

- What I found:
  - Presence in higher education is increasing by all minority groups, except for one
    - “While all other ethnic groups – including African Americans- have gradually increased their college graduation rates, Latinos have seen almost no such progress in three decades.” (Contreras & Gandara)



# LITERATURE REVIEW

- College degrees play a crucial role in the type of employment that one will be able to procure
  - “At a time when college has become the new critical threshold for entry into the middle class, overwhelming majority of Latinos do not attend degree-granting colleges – and those who do attend, often don’t graduate. Thus Latinos remain the most undereducated major population group in the country.” (Contreras & Gandara)

# LITERATURE REVIEW

- Female Hispanics “have two strikes against them”
  - “Women, especially minority women, face a more hostile atmosphere and double discrimination.” (Perspectives)

# BARRIERS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

- Primary & secondary education
  - American educational system fails to meet the needs of Hispanic students
    - May not receive a high school diploma
      - In Boston, over 3 years as many as 14% of Hispanic students dropped out of middle school



# BARRIERS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

- Language
  - Primary language spoken at home can be Spanish
    - One can accurately predict which students will go to college and which will not, based on reading tests administered in the third grade
  - Perceptions
    - General lack of perceived opportunities

# BARRIERS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

- Socio-Economic factors
  - Less affluent families
- Government & Policy
  - Many programs to bring more minorities into higher education
    - Only 5% of eligible Hispanics take advantage of these programs

# BARRIERS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

- Cultural barriers
  - Traditional culture vs. American culture
  - Document status
  - Teenage pregnancy
  - Patterns of Abuse
  - Stereotypes



# COMBATING BARRIERS

- Positive relationship between one's involvement in school and one's success in school
- Campuses should appear welcoming and inviting to Latina students
- Faculty-Student relationships

# SURVEY DESIGN

- Final survey
  - Distributed through Survey Monkey
  - 23 questions (some have multiple parts)
  - Aimed at gauging socio-economic status, education level, and reasons why people choose to not further their education



# SAMPLE SURVEY QUESTIONS

**16. Please answer the following questions using the following scale./Por favor de contestar las siguientes preguntas usando la siguiente escala.**

**Disagree/No estoy de acuerdo**

**Neutral/Neutral**

**Agree/Estoy de acuerdo**

|  | Disagree/No estoy de acuerdo | Nuetral               | Agree/Estoy de acuerdo |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| A college degree is necessary to make good money./Un título universitario es necesario para conseguir un buen salario. | <input type="radio"/>        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>  |
| I feel that others want me to succeed. /Yo me siento que otros tienes deseos que yo tenga éxito.                       | <input type="radio"/>        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>  |
| My experience with school has been positive./Mi experiencia con la escuela ha sido positiva.                           | <input type="radio"/>        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>  |

# SAMPLE SURVEY QUESTIONS

**13. Do you regularly use social networking sites like Facebook?/¿Usted usa sitio web de red social como o parecido a Facebook?**

- ☐ Yes/Sí
- ☐ No/No
- ☐ Sometimes/Algunas veces

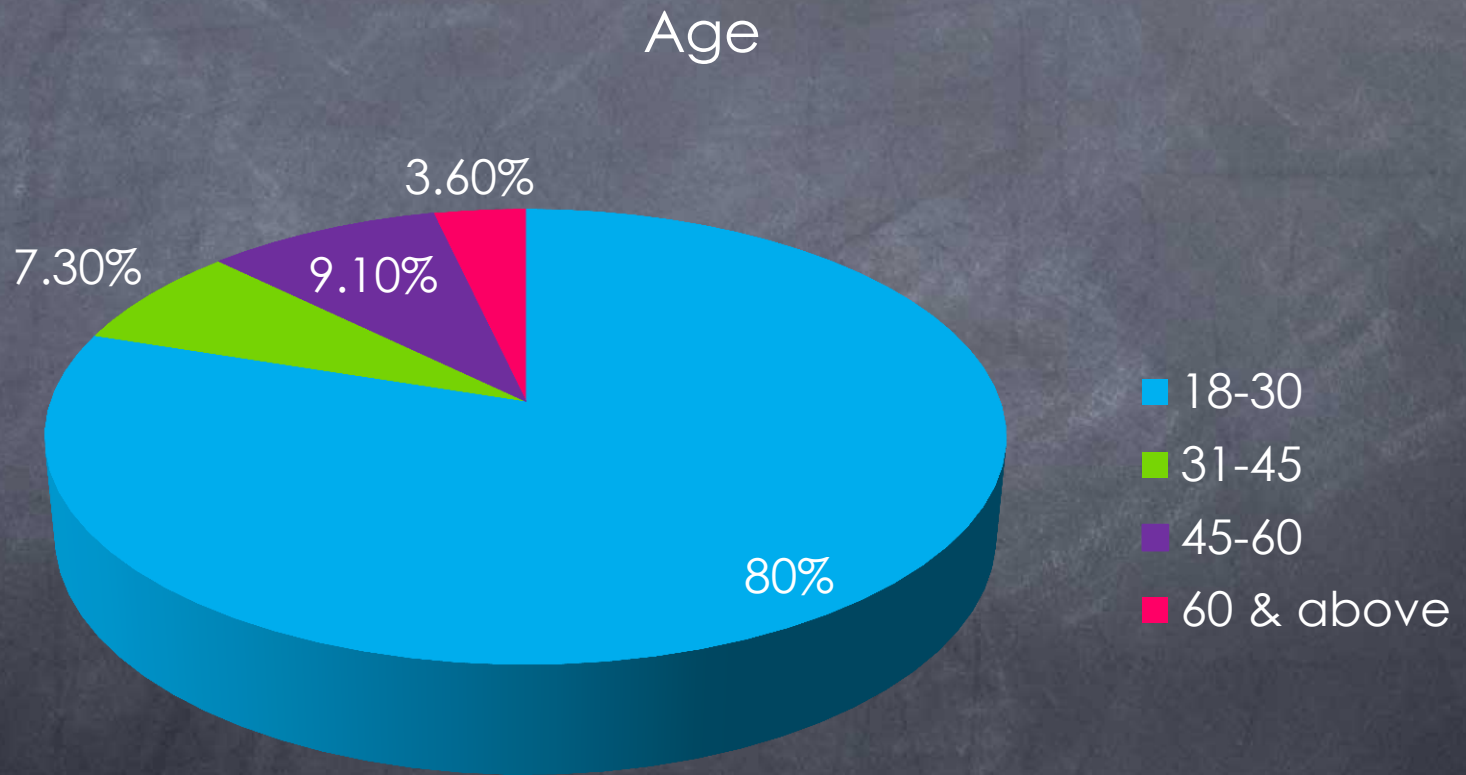
**15. If all education was free, would you want to receive a degree/another degree?/¿Si todo tipo de educación fuera gratis, usted quisiera obtener un/otro título universitario?**

- ☐ Yes/Sí
- ☐ No/No
- ☐ Not sure/No estoy seguro/a

# SURVEY RECRUITMENT & DISTRIBUTION

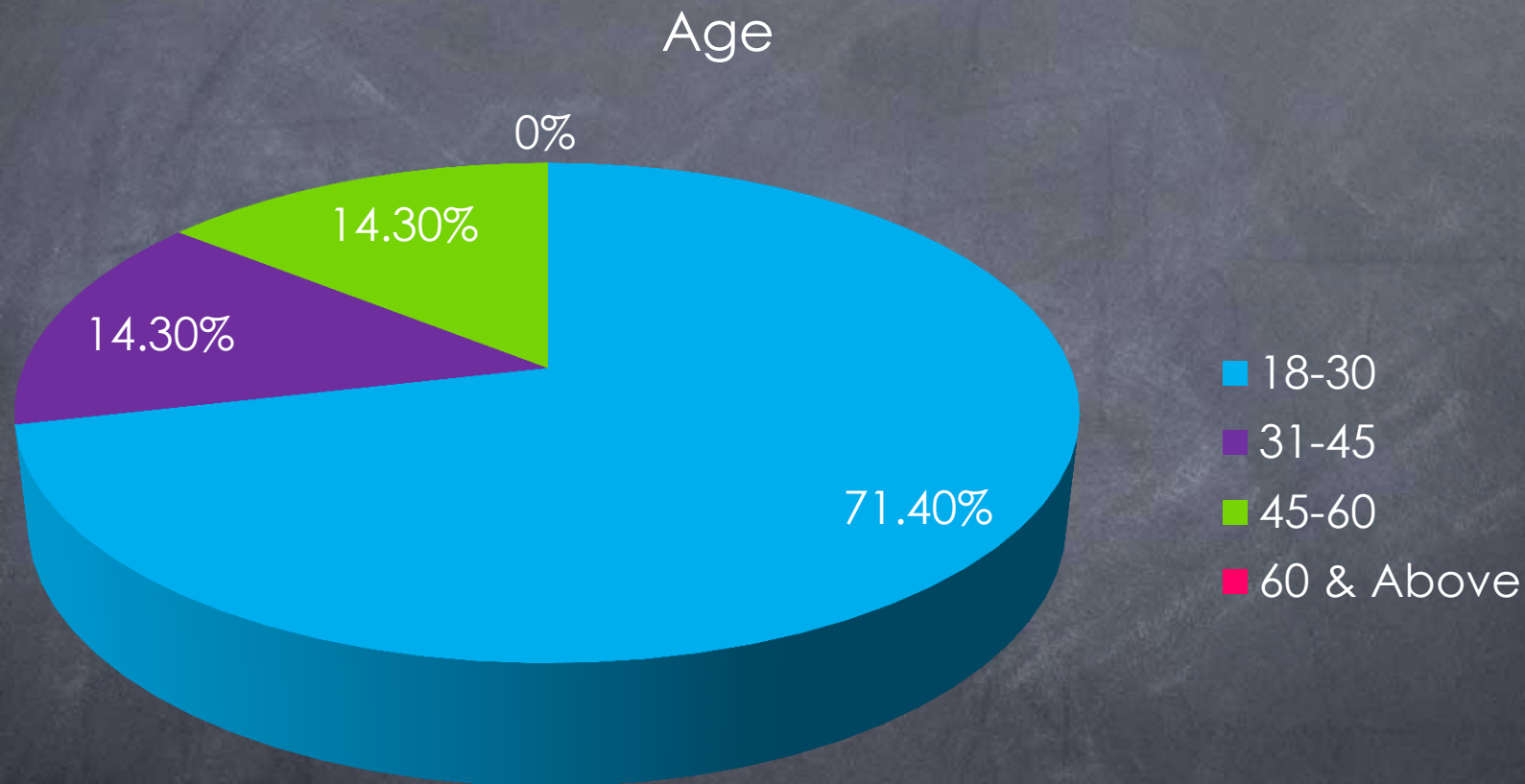
- Bright orange flyers were posted around campus
- Emails sent to various organizations within the state & URI itself who agreed to help distribute the survey
  - Progreso Latino
  - Latino College Access Coalition for the College Planning Center of RI

# SURVEY PARTICIPANTS





# HISPANIC PARTICIPANTS



# ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

- Hispanic Participants
  - Most (85.7%) responded that they speak English fluently.
  - More than half (57.1%) responded that they speak both English and Spanish in their home.
  - More than half (57.1%) were born in America, 42.9% were born in another country

# ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

- All of the Hispanic participants had at least some college, with 57.1% holding an undergraduate degree or above.
- All reported that they had access to the internet, and with the exception of 1, all reported that they regularly use social networking sites.

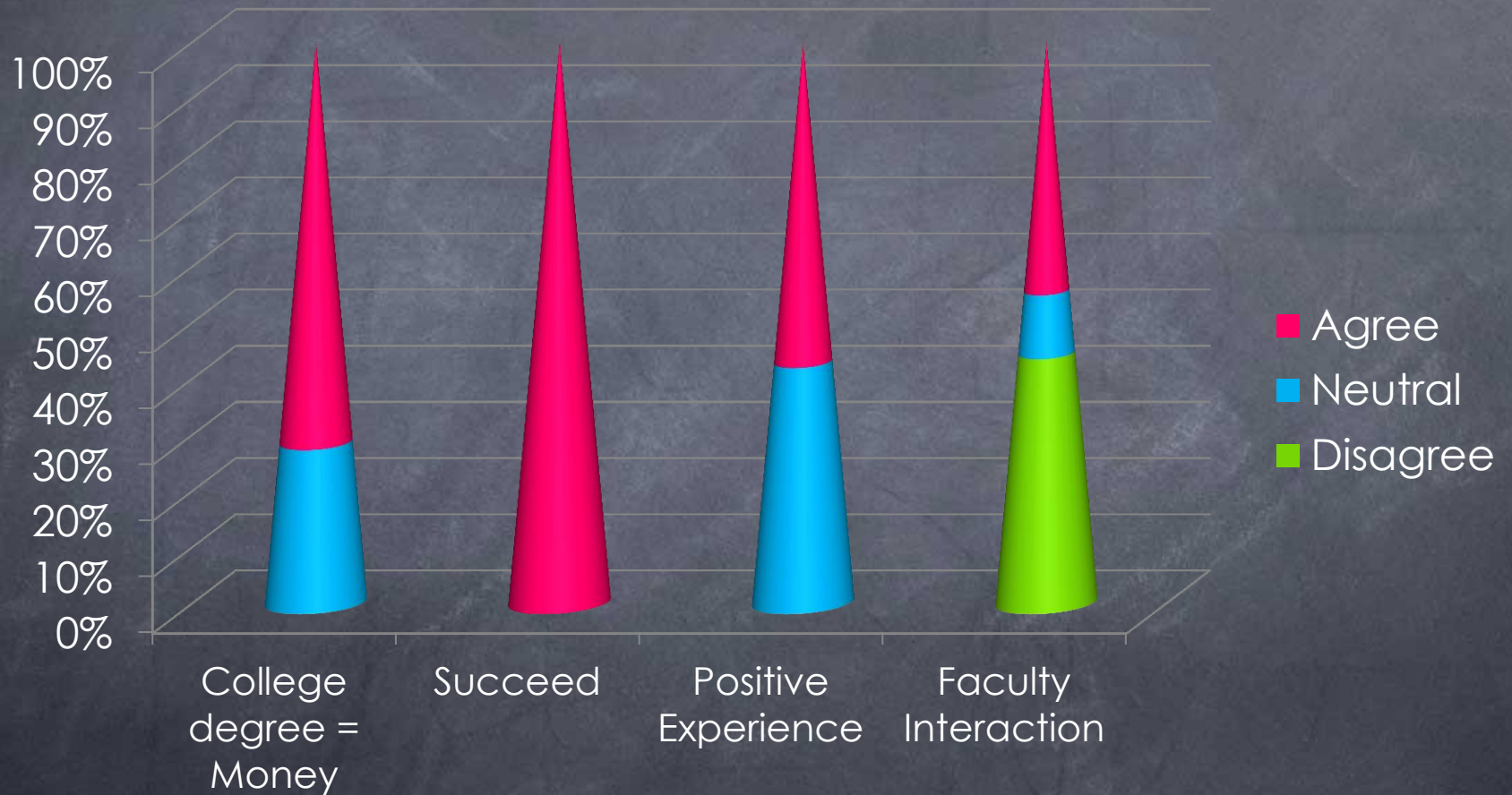


# ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

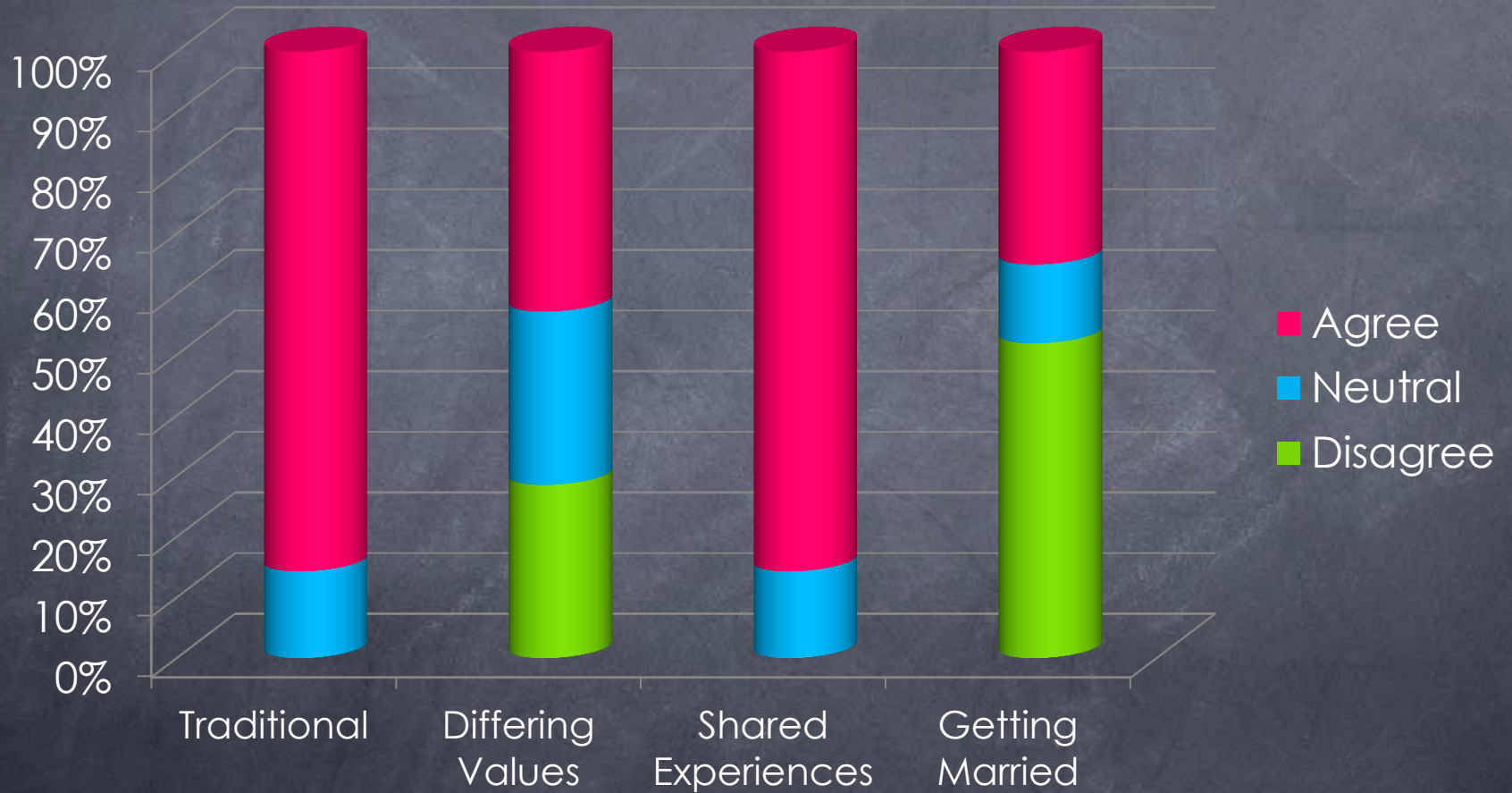
- A little over half (57.1%) reported that they had been contacted by a college outreach group in the past.
- 100% of Hispanic participants responded that if all education were free, they would get a degree/another degree.



# SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

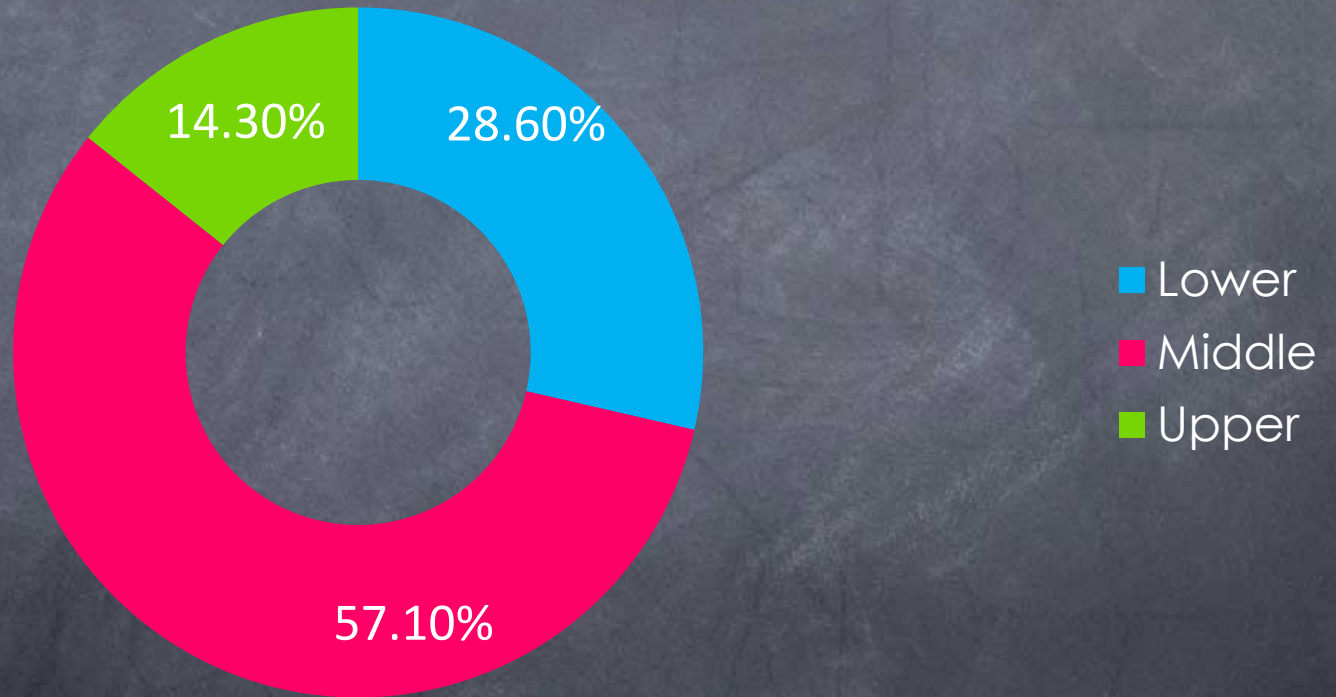


# EXPERIENCES



# SOCIO-ECONOMICS

**Class**





# COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- Some community resources that the respondents reported that they used:
  - Library
  - Parks
  - Public College (CCRI, RIC, URI)
  - Church

# CULTURAL VIEWS

- Most participants reported that they do believe that how other cultures perceive their culture affects their opportunities.

# RESOURCE CREATION

- Based on my research, I decided to create an informational website and brochure
  - Website: <https://sites.google.com/a/my.uri.edu/powerup/>
  - Currently under construction, but will have resources for people to understand their options



THE END

